

# Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Olds



## Considerations for Districts Interested in Applying for Funding

### **LEVEL OF NEED**

School districts should consider the level of preschool program needs within district boundaries.

- How many four-year-olds are currently enrolled in Head Start, Shared Visions, district, or other community-based preschool programs?
- How many children are on waiting lists for preschool programs?
- Is the level of quality in existing preschools adequate to meet program standards and licensed teacher requirements?
- Is there a preschool program in the district that utilizes blended funding (i.e. Head Start, Early Childhood Special Education, Empowerment, School Ready Funds, tuition) that could be expanded with Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program funds?

### **POVERTY LEVEL**

School districts should consider the poverty level of the community.

- What is the percentage of families, K-6, that qualify for free and reduced meals?
- What is the socio-economic diversity of the community?
- How would the district ensure priority for children in poverty?
- Have the demographics of the community undergone major change?
  - Shifting business climate
  - Influx of immigrants
  - Increase in population of children less than five

### **PRESCHOOL PROGRAM STANDARDS**

School districts should consider the potential to meet quality preschool program standards within 12 months of the start of their Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program. Approved options for preschool program standards include:

- National Association for the Education of Young Children Accreditation System  
<http://www.naeyc.org/accreditation/>
- Head Start Performance Program Standards  
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/hsb/performance/index.htm> ; or
- Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards  
<http://www.iowa.gov/educate/content/view/681/1016/1/2/>

### **COLLABORATION WITH COMMUNITY**

School districts should consider their level of established collaborative relationships with required multiple community partners such as:

- Families;
- Other accredited nonpublic schools and faith-based representatives;
- Area Education Agencies;

- Community Empowerment Boards;
- Business representatives;
- Head Start;
- Shared Visions (if a program is located within district boundaries);
- Center-based and Home-based child care and preschool programs;
- Department of Human Services;
- Child Care Resource and Referral;
- Public Health; and
- Economic development programs.

### **TEACHER LICENSURE**

School districts should consider their ability to provide appropriately licensed teachers for the minimum required 10 hours of intentional instruction expected.

- Appropriate endorsements include
  - Teacher—Pre kindergarten through third grade, including special education;
  - Teacher—Pre kindergarten through kindergarten; and
  - Teacher—Pre kindergarten through third grade.

### **READY TO IMPLEMENT**

School districts should consider their ability to be fully operational no later than the preliminary preschool count date in September of the initial year of funding in order to receive preschool aid formula funding for subsequent years.

### **ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- School districts should consider the ability of the Board/Leadership Team to study and meet early childhood education community needs.
- School districts should consider their ability to provide an administrative staff person who would be responsible for coordination of preschool programming, assuring the quality program standards are implemented, and assurances required by law are met.
- School districts should consider administrative staff needs for professional development in regard to preschool, state initiatives, and building collaborative relationships with community partners.
- School districts should consider the level of demand from parents and the community for quality preschool programming.
- School districts should consider their level of commitment for involvement of families in the development of the application for Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program funds, the preschool program design, continuous improvement, and ongoing evaluation of the program.

### **APPLICATION INFORMATION**

Districts interested in applying for Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Funding can access application information from the Department of Education website:

<http://www.iowa.gov/educate/content/view/940/1016/>

### **DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION CONTACTS**

Lorri Cooper, Preschool Consultant, [Lorri.Cooper@iowa.gov](mailto:Lorri.Cooper@iowa.gov) or 515-281-3033  
 Susan Ward, Preschool Consultant, [Susan.Ward@iowa.gov](mailto:Susan.Ward@iowa.gov) or 515-281-4709